

Excerpt from *The Many Rides of Paul Revere: The Boston Tea Party*

by James Cross Giblin

Ships filled with cargoes of tea were already sailing toward American ports. The first to arrive in Boston was the *Dartmouth*. The Sons warned its owner not to unload the vessel “on his peril.” Twenty-five members of the Sons, armed with muskets and bayonets, stood guard that night to make sure the owner obeyed the warning. Among them was
5 Paul Revere.

The next day, the Sons decided that nearby seaports should be alerted that British tea ships might try to unload at their docks. In a time before the telegraph and telephone had been invented, the only means of speedy communication was a rider on a fast horse. So the Sons assigned five horsemen, including Paul, to carry their urgent message.

10 Paul must have been an excellent rider for this would be only the first of many rides he would make on behalf of the Revolution. We don’t know where he was headed on that December day, or how long it took him to ride there and back. But he must have had to fight weariness all the way, since he’d had no sleep the night before.

15 In Boston, meanwhile, two more tea-ships joined the *Dartmouth* at Griffin’s Wharf. A huge crowd in Old South Meeting House agreed with Samuel Adams that all three ships must return to England without unloading. But the royal governor wouldn’t let them leave the wharf.

Samuel Adams announced the governor’s decision to the crowd at Old South, saying, “This meeting can do nothing more to save the country.” In response, a man jumped up,
20 shouting “To Griffin’s Wharf!” Another yelled, “Boston Harbor will be a teapot tonight!”

That night more than a hundred men, most of them Sons of Liberty, gathered at the wharf where the three tea ships were docked. The men wore ragged clothes and had darkened their faces with soot or lamp black so they would not be recognized. As part of their disguise, many of the men carried tomahawks like those used by Native Americans.

25 Hundreds of other Bostonians watched from the wharf as the men boarded the first of the ships. After getting the key to the hold, the men hauled the tea chests up onto the deck, broke them open, and hurled them into the water. Once all the tea from the first ship had been disposed of, the men moved on to the other ships and repeated the process.

30 No one tried to stop them. By the time the men had finished, Boston Harbor was awash with tea.

Was Paul one of those who dumped the tea? Legend says he was, and his name appears (along with that of his friend, Dr. Joseph Warren) in a song about the event that was written immediately afterward by an unknown poet.

35 *Rally Mohawks! Bring out your axes,
And tell King George we'll pay no taxes
On his foreign tea. . .
Our Warren's here and bold Revere
With hands to do and words to cheer
For Liberty and laws. . .*

40 What we do know for sure is that the day after the Boston Tea Party, as it came to be known, Paul Revere set out once again. This time he rode to New York and then on to Philadelphia to tell sympathizers in those cities what had happened in Boston.

45 Starting out before dawn on a hired horse, Paul followed a route mail riders—the mailmen of their day—had carved out over the years. The route headed west from Boston to Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts, then turned south to Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut, and southwest from there to New York City. The dirt roads Paul traveled were dusty in dry weather, muddy when wet, and always rough.

50 After meeting with fellow rebels in New York, Paul climbed back into the saddle and took a ferry across the Hudson River to New Jersey. Picking up speed, he rode south through New Jersey to Trenton, where he boarded another ferry that carried him and his horse across the Delaware River to Pennsylvania. From there it wasn't far to his final destination, Philadelphia.